

genus he rejects Kuhl's "*Sectio VI. Probosciger*," which has just the same status, "because *Probosciger* is not a generic name, but a term used by Kuhl for his sect. vi, of the genus *Psittacus*"! (p. 102). In seeking a substitute for *Probosciger* he passes over *Solenoglossus* Ranz, 1821, for *Microglossus* Vieill., 1821-23, after admitting the former has priority, because *Solenoglossus* "conveys quite a false idea of the structure of the tongue"!

Micropsitta Lesson, 1831, and *Nasiterna* Wagler, 1832, is a case parallel with *Amazona* and *Chrysotis*, where for no good reason a later name is taken for an earlier. *Ognorhynchus* Bon., 1857, clearly has priority over *Gnathosittaca* Cab., 1864, even if the former be taken from Gray, as used for a subgenus in 1859.

As our author adheres to the principle that erroneously constructed names should be corrected, it is not surprising that he should reject names that, in his opinion, are too barbarous to be tolerated, as for example, *Psittrichas* Lesson, *Graydidascalus* Bon., etc.

In palliation it should be said that the practices here criticized are not innovations; his nomenclatural usages in the present work are in the main consistent not only with those of his former works, but with those of many other veterans of the science; and it is perhaps too soon to expect any great swerving from long established methods, out of deference to a set of new-fangled rules recently adopted by a large number of ornithologists in behalf of stability of nomenclature. Aside from a few faults of nomenclature (as we view the case), the work is entitled to the highest approbation, and must win for its renowned author the deep gratitude of systematic ornithologists everywhere.—J. A. A.

Mrs. Miller's 'Little Brothers of the Air.'*—The frequent appearance nowadays of books and magazine articles on natural history is undeniable evidence of a growing class of readers who in these smaller volumes approach that larger book to which the eyes of the world are gradually opening. We wish we might accord to all these aids the hearty welcome Mrs. Miller's latest book deserves. But alas! natural history 'copy readers' are as yet an unknown adjunct of publishing houses. If they were we should be spared some of the unwitting mistakes or deliberate falsehoods which unchallenged pass their presses. After reading recently in a leading monthly that there are ten thousand species of water-birds, or learning from a book issued by one of our large educational publishing firms, that the Grebe paddles its nest to safety by stretching one leg over the edge, it is a relief to take up a popular work based on original, accurate, painstaking observation. Mrs. Miller is an enthusiast. Her patience is untiring, and her reward is not a 'skin,' or a 'full-clutch,' but a new fact in the life, if not of the species, at least of the individual bird she

* Little Brothers of the Air | By | Olive Thorne Miller | [seal and motto] | Boston and New York | Houghton, Mifflin and Company | The Riverside Press, Cambridge | 1892. 12°, pp. vii, 271.

is studying. Who among our 'collectors' can boast of a vigil over a bird's nest which lasted for "nearly two months . . . day after day, early and late, in storm and sunshine"? With a just pride the patient watcher writes, "now I know at least one family of Kingbirds," and whether the results of her observations are of more value than the 'skin' or 'full-clutch' no one who reads her attractively written chapters will for a moment doubt. Withal her enthusiasm is tempered by discretion. She does not jump at conclusions nor sacrifice truth to rhetorical effect, and a careful reading of the twenty-six chapters her book contains, leaves us wondering whether we know any ornithologists who as observers have one half her perseverance. Only one fault do we discover, a fault we are sure so careful a writer will not fail to correct in the future volumes we hope to see from her hand. And this fault is lack of more detailed statements as regards both date and locality. Under the heading 'Great South Bay' we find two chapters from Massachusetts, while a record of the exact date on which her observations were made would in nowise detract from the popular character of the book and would add largely to the scientific value it unquestionably possesses.—F. M. C.

'Wood Notes Wild.'*—Some of Mr. Cheney's studies of bird music are already familiar to us through the pages of the magazines in which, from time to time, they have appeared.

They have now been collected by his son and, with the addition of before unpublished essays, copious extracts from the writings of other authors, and an extended bibliography, issued under the above title. The whole, we believe, forms the most extensive treatise on the subject extant.

Every writer of bird biographies has experienced the difficulty of describing bird's songs in an identifiable manner. There are some cries or call-notes, and more rarely songs, which so closely approach certain words of our language that by common consent their owners are dubbed forthwith and thus made to utter their own name, to the great assistance of beginners in ornithology. To this class belong the Pewee, Chickadee, Towhee, Bob-white, Squak, etc. But unfortunately the limits of human articulation are soon passed, and where description fails, as it too frequently does, we have ventured to hope musical notation might succeed. Certainly no one could be better fitted to prove its success than Mr. Cheney. A musician of undoubted ability, an ardent lover of nature, his book "is a record of the pastime of an old lover of birds, of a musician who counted it among his chief joys that he had lived thirty summers in a bird-haunted grove,—of one to whom the voice of the wood and field were as familiar as those of his own family" (editor's preface). We may then consider his labors as a fair, if not a final test of the assistance which musical notation can give us in recording and describing the songs of birds.

* *Wood Notes Wild* | *Notations of Bird Music* | By | Simeon Pease Cheney | Author of the American "Singing-book" | Collected and Arranged with Appendix, Notes, Bibliography, and General Index | By John Vance Cheney | . . . | Boston | Lee and Shepard Publishers | . . . | 1892. 12 mo. pp. i-xiv, 1-261, frontispiece.